

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 TRSE-00 DHA-02 /060 W  
-----051624Z 017488 /40

R 051413Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4389  
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE  
AMCONSUL MILAN  
AMCONSUL NAPLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 7311

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, IT, VT  
SUBJECT: VATICAN PERSPECTIVES ON ITALIAN POLITICS

1. SUMMARY: DURING THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL CRISIS "VATICANOLOGISTS" ARE CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZING VATICAN AND CHURCH PRESS ORGANS FOR INDICATIONS OF THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS VARIOUS PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES TO PRESENT POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS. THE VATICAN, WHILE CLEARLY OPPOSED TO THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, HAS DESISTED FROM DIRECTLY COMMENTING ON THE CURRENT PARTY DISCUSSIONS. THE CHURCH ORGAN, AVVENIRE, HOWEVER, HAS COME OUT STRONGLY IN OPPOSITION TO THREE ALTERNATIVES FOR RESOLVING CRISIS, I.E. NEW ELECTIONS, THE PASSAGE OF DC TO OPPOSITION AND A PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD WITH PCI. END SUMMARY.

2. THE VATICAN AND THE CHURCH ARE OPPOSED TO THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE--E.G. PCI/DC SHARING OF GOVERNMENTAL POWER. THIS POSITION IS BASED BOTH ON DOCTRINAL AND POLITICAL GROUNDS. ON POLITICAL GROUNDS, THEY FEAR THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPABILITY OF  
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THE PCI TO INCREASE ITS CULTURAL HEGEMONY IN ITALY, BECAUSE THE DC IS STILL CONSIDERED UNABLE TO CHALLENGE IT. DOCTRINALLY, THERE IS THE OFTEN REPEATED POSITION OF THE CHURCH ON THE INCOMPATIBILITY BETWEEN MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY. THIS DOCTRINE WAS ONCE AGAIN RESTATED BY THE VATICAN'S L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO ON MARCH 19, THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENCYCLICAL

DIVINI REDEMPTORIS, WITH THE LAT TITLE OF "ATHEISTIC COMMUNISM." THREE LONG ARTICLES WERE DEVOTED TO THE COMMEMORATION OF THE ENCYCLICAL, THE CHIEF OF WHICH WAS WRITTEN BY CARDINAL HOFFNER (PRIMATE OF GERMANY). THE CARDINAL CONCLUDES THAT "COMMUNISM, NEITHER WHERE IT IS IN POWER, NOR WHERE IT ADOPTS THE DEMOCRATIC RULE, IS READY TO RENOUNCE ITS MATERIALISTIC CONCEPTIONS, AND THAT "EVEN IF ORTHODOX COMMUNISTS WON'T ADMIT IT, IT WILL LEAD BY ITS INNER FORCE TO DICTATORSHIP AND TO A NON-CHRISTIAN CULTURE."

3. SIMILAR ASSESSMENTS OF THE CONTINUING VIABILITY OF THE ENCYCLICAL'S CONDEMNATION OF COMMUNISM ALSO APPEARED IN THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY ORGAN L'AVVENIRE AND WERE VOICED IN RADIO VATICANO COMMENTARY.

4. IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS THE VATICAN HAS ABSTAINED FROM COMMENTING ON THE PROSPECTS OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS. L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, IN ITS DAILY ITALIAN POLITICAL COLUMN, IS OBJECTIVELY REPORTING THE KEY STATEMENTS OF ALL PARTY LEADERS WITHOUT EDITORIAL COMMENT.

5. ON MAY 3, HOWEVER, L'AVVENIRE, IN AN UNSIGNED EDITORIAL ENTITLED "A WAY OF NO RETURN," COMMENTED DIRECTLY ON THE POLITICAL CRISIS. THE EDITORIAL, WHILE ACCEPTING THE PROPOSITION THAT THE COUNTRY WAS IN A "GRAVE CRISIS" OF MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT THE SITUATION IS AT A "VERY DELICATE STAGE," REJECTS THREE PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES FOR RESOLVING THE CRISIS--NEW ELECTIONS; THE PASSAGE OF THE DC INTO OPPOSITION AND GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMATIC ACCORD WITH THE PCI. "WE ARE FIRMLY CONVINCED THAT," SAYS THE EDITORIAL, "AN ACCORD OVER POINTS OF A GOVERNMENT PROGRAM WOULD CONSTITUTE, IN FACT, ONE MORE STEP ON A ROAD WITHOUT RETURN." THE EDITORIAL ALSO ADMONISHES THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY TO BE TRUE TO ITS PRECISE ELECTORAL MANDATE (I.E. TO OPPOSE COMMUNIST ASSOCIATION IN THE GOVERNMENT) AND TO CONDUCT ITSELF WITH MAXIMUM ATTENTIVENESS, AVOIDING GIVING BIRTH TO A "PROCESS WHICH WOULD RENDER IRREVERSIBLE THE MARCH TOWARD COMMUNIST HEGEMONY."

6. L'AVVENIRE'S PREFERRED SOLUTION WOULD BE THE RESTORATION OF THE CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT AND TO THIS EFFECT IT CALLS ON THE PSI, PSDI, AND PRI TO

GIVE UP THEIR ACRITICAL SUBMISSION OR PSYCHOLOGICAL  
DEPENDENCE ON THE PCI AND RETURN TO COLLABORATION  
WITH THE DC. IN ANY CASE , THE DC MUST REMAIN  
TRUE TO ITS PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT A CLEAR DIALOGUE  
WITH THEM AS WELL AS WITH THE PCI. IT IS NOT HONEST  
"TO PRETEND TO CONSIDER (THE PCI) A DEMOCRATIC PARTY,  
SINCE EVEN INTERNALLY IT DOES NOT  
JUDGE ITSELF DEMOCRATIC OR NOT YET DEMOCRATIC."  
NEVERTHELESS, THE PCI SHOULD BE ASSISTED IN  
"LIBERATING" ITSELF FROM ITS IDEOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS  
WITH MARXISM AND ITS POLITICAL LINKS WITH THE SOVIET  
UNION--ONLY THEN WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO TALK ABOUT  
"ANOTHER TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP" WITH THE PCI.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 7311

7. COMMENT: THESE ARE STRONG WORDS AND THEY  
PROBABLY REPRESENT THE ATTITUDE OF A MAJORITY  
OF THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY. SOME OBSERVERS  
BELIEVE THAT THE EDITORIAL IS DELIBERATELY SET  
FORTH IN MAXIMALIST TERMS IN ORDER TO  
STIFFEN THE DC'S RESOLVE IN ITS NEGOTIATIONS WITH  
THE PCI. A MORE AUTHORITATIVE  
PROMOUNCEMENT COULD COME NEXT WEEK WHEN THE  
ITALIAN BISHOPS ASSEMBLY IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE  
PLACE. IT IS SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, THAT THE VATICAN  
ITSELF HAS NOT MADE PUBLIC ITS POSITION. LACK OF DIRECT  
PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE MERIT OF THE VARIOUS FORMULAS  
FOR RESOLVING THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS COULD  
REFLECT: (1) A VATICAN WISH NOT TO HAVE A FRONTAL

CONFRONTATION WITH THE PCI AT THIS TIME; OR (2)  
ITS ASSESSMENT THAT THE PRESENT INTERPARTY DISCUSSIONS  
WILL LEAD TO CAREFULLY CONTROLLED STEPS FOR RESOLVING  
CRISIS. IN ANY CASE, THE VATICAN REALIZES THAT THE  
PCI HOLDS KEY ROLE IN PARLIAMENTARY CONSIDERATION  
OF ABORTION LEGISLATION AND ALSO ON THE EVENTUAL  
APPROVAL OF A REVISION TO THE CONCORDAT. ON BOTH  
THESE ITEMS, THE PCI HAS PLAYED A MODERATING ROLE:  
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INDEPENDENT SENATORS ELECTED ON THE PCI ELECTORAL  
LISTS ARE NOW LEADING EFFORTS TO MAKE LEGISLATION  
MORE PALATIBLE TO THE CATHOLICS, AND ON THE  
REVISION OF THE CONCORDAT THE PCI POSITION  
HAS, INsofar AS THE VATICAN IS CONCERNED, BEEN  
MORE CONSTRUCTIVE THAN THE SMALL LAY PARTIES.GARDNER

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PFOR, IT, VT  
**To:** STATE  
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Margaret P. Grafeld  
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